

Press Releases



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Secretary Richardson Accepts Recommendations for Improving Security at Nuclear Weapons Laboratories

Energy Secretary Bill Richardson today accepted the recommendations of John Gordon, National Nuclear Security Administrator, for improving security and other facility operations at the Energy Department's Los Alamos National Laboratory and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, both operated by the University of California. On June 30, Secretary Richardson asked Administrator Gordon to prepare recommendations for restructuring the University of California (UC) contracts with the Energy Department's weapons laboratories.

Based on these recommendations, Energy Secretary Richardson has authorized the NNSA Administrator to immediately restructure the department's current contracts with the University of California to address security and management issues. The department will also commence negotiations with UC that, if successful, would lead to additional performance requirements and a three year extension of the contract. The current UC contract for the operation of the laboratories runs through September 30, 2002.

The initial phase of recommended improvements, which Administrator Gordon will work with UC to begin implementing, include:

- Creating a UC Vice President for Laboratory Management with authority to establish operational and management standards, including security measures, for the weapons laboratories;
- Bringing in subcontractor experts in security, facility operations, and project and construction management to support the lab directors in making overall security policy and operational improvements, and to help the new UC Vice President obtain similar expertise; and
- Establishing a Laboratory Senior Management Council reporting to the University President to advise on key management and security issues.

When Secretary Richardson made his June 30th decision to restructure the Department's contract with the University of California, he recognized the University's unparalleled scientific reputation and its valuable contributions to the scientific vitality of the laboratories. At the same time, Secretary Richardson was sharply critical of their failure to bring the same degree of expertise to the management of security and facility operations. These near-term actions are designed to help address these shortcomings.

Secretary Richardson also accepted Administrator Gordon's recommendation to work to extend the UC contract by the end of the year to improve UC's performance not only in security and project management but also in health and safety, community and employee relations and other non-science management areas. The extension will be contingent on successful negotiations in these areas.

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